

Border Patrol to Test Specially Designed Severe Off-Road Vehicles ***San Diego and El Centro to Receive First of the So-called “SORVs”***

San Diego, Calif. — Citing the uniquely rigorous demands their duties place on vehicles, the Border Patrol today unveiled the first of a new generation of “severe off-road vehicles” being deployed to the southern border on a one year trial basis. The so-called “SORVs” are custom designed to address the rugged driving conditions and climatic extremes encountered by Border Patrol agents working along the border.

The SORV prototypes are being engineered by leading automakers as part of a pilot program to develop a safer more durable off-road vehicle for the Border Patrol. Under the program, the Border Patrol submitted a list of specifications to three major manufacturers - General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler. The automakers are responsible for deciding which products, systems, and equipment to incorporate in the vehicles and the Border Patrol will evaluate the results.

San Diego and El Centro are the first Border Patrol sectors to take delivery of the SORV prototypes, but four additional southern border sectors are slated to receive test vehicles as well. They include the Tucson and Yuma sectors in Arizona, and the El Paso and Marfa sectors in Texas. These sectors were chosen because they have large expanses of harsh terrain along or near the border. Ultimately, 18 of the specially built vehicles will be deployed under the pilot program.

“To be effective, our agents need to be able to get to rugged and remote areas,” said Assistant Chief Patrol Agent Sheridan Kennedy of the San Diego Sector. “Increasingly, we’re finding commercially available sport utility vehicles don’t hold up under these kinds of conditions. As part of this program, we’ll be working with major auto makers to develop a vehicle that is better suited to our unique mission.”

Each of the SORVs being tested will be a hand-assembled prototype built atop a heavy-duty pick-up truck frame. The SORVs will incorporate a range of special features and technology including an advanced suspension system, load leveling air bags, and a heavy-duty axle and transmission.

The pilot program is the latest effort by the Border Patrol to identify a vehicle that will withstand prolonged off-road use in severe terrain. The Patrol is also evaluating the Hummer, built by AM General, for Border Patrol use. That test is underway in the Yuma and El Centro Sectors. Officials note that in some areas, the lighter sport utility vehicles currently in the Border Patrol fleet become inoperable in as little as six months because of the extreme conditions.

